

## THE GALLERY AS CLUBHOUSE

by Dean Kissick

Legendary dealers—Leo Castelli, Colin de Land and Pat Hearn, Gavin Brown—have always created communities. The same remains true today. Maxwell Graham, Brendan Dugan, Daniel Wichelhaus and Vanessa Carlos have made their galleries into homes for those around them, which continue to evolve in response to the times we are in.



*No title*, 2019. A watercolor by Matthew Wong of Brendan Dugan's feet.

### **Brendan Dugan of Karma**

A short walk north of Essex Street in the East Village, Karma has also been involving itself in politics (among many other things) and at an even more local level. In November 2018, founder Brendan Dugan teamed up with the organizations Downtown for Democracy and Swing Left and chartered a bus from his gallery to New York's 11th Congressional District so that local community members could join him in canvassing for the Democrats in the midterms; specifically, they could join in canvassing for Max Rose against the Republican incumbent Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.

When it's not a canvassing headquarters, the gallery on 2nd Street is a neighborhood hangout known for its bright aesthetic of colorful abstract and figurative painting, the cool kids and celebrities at its openings and the taco truck outside serving free quesadillas to guests. Karma's rare art and design bookstore on 3rd Street is another great East Village hangout: a shop, a research library and a venue for events like Sarah Blakley-Cartwright's recent live reading series, which hosted novelists including Tony Tulathimutte and Simeon Marsalis. Each reading was accompanied by the unveiling of a new painted poster by Nicolas Party, and the project slowly grew into an exhibition over the course of the year.

Everything at Karma grows and grows. Dugan started out as a designer making posters and books for artists. Then he opened his bookstore, which also functions as a gallery. Then he opened his stand-alone gallery, which also functions as a space for organizing. "We have a lot of different things happening," he says. "I think that's how people live, in a weird way."

As for Rose, the Democrat; he took the 11th Congressional District by 12,382 votes.